

Workshop Report

Taking a Gender Perspective

to Strengthen the Multi-Country
Demobilization and Reintegration
Program (MDRP) in the greater
Great Lakes Region

Kigali, Rwanda

October 31 - November 2, 2005



Angola

Burundi

**Central African
Republic**

**Democratic Republic
of Congo**

Republic of Congo

Rwanda

Uganda



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. From October 31 to November 2, 2005, the World Bank/MDRP Secretariat and UNIFEM held a consultation workshop aimed at strengthening gender in the MDRP national programs. Approximately 80 participants from the seven national delegations (Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda), UNICEF, UNDP, ONUB, MONUC, UNIFEM, civil society, and the MDRP Secretariat participated, as well as international experts on gender and DDR, and women ex-combatants from the region.

2. The workshop lasted two and a half days. The first day focused on the MDRP's and UNIFEM's approaches to gender and DDR, with UNIFEM covering the draft UN Integrated DDR Standard for Women Gender and DDR; results of country-level assessments of gender in national DDR programs; a thematic presentation on masculinity and violence in conflict and the implications for DDR, and case studies on gender and DDR from UNIFEM, UNICEF and women ex-combatants. The second day began with group work on four issues: (a) barriers facing women and girls in accessing DDR programs, (b) gender dimensions of reintegration and reinsertion, (c) collaboration among national DDR, NGO and civil society initiatives, and (d) gender from the perspective of masculinity, men and boys. In the afternoon, participants broke into country-specific working groups to discuss how to strengthen gender dimensions and enhance collaboration in their national programs. Finally, representatives of national DDR groups reported out on the previous day's discussions in a plenary session and the MDRP Secretariat presented conclusions from the workshop.

3. A number of themes recurred throughout the workshop, including: (a) eligibility criteria for ex-combatants in DDR programs, which do not include women and girls associated with fighting forces; (b) the under-reporting by commanders of girls and women ex-combatants; (c) the significant barriers faced by girls and women in accessing DDR-related assistance; (d) gender-specific challenges to reintegration for men and women – including for women the negative perceptions of their experiences within fighting forces, reduced access to education or employment, and the stigma of children born in fighting forces; (e) the lack of capacity within DDR executing agencies to address gender; and (f) the need to understand gender, conflict and DDR from a male gender perspective, including the reasons men are drawn into violence and how to address these factors.

4. The MDRP Secretariat wrapped up the workshop by summarizing the key themes and conclusions and presenting next steps, which were the following:

5. **Conceptual Approaches to Gender and DDR.** Over the course of the workshop, three conceptual approaches were applied to addressing gender in DDR. The first was to view and treat women as a marginalized group and focus on their special needs. The second was to stress gender equity in DDR access and benefits. The third was to broaden the notion of gender-responsive programming to include men and boys and to develop approaches to gender analysis and gender-responsive programming that helped produce

opportunities for change and social transformation for women, girls, men and boys. Within these three approaches, limitations in the timeframe and scope for DDR programs were important considerations, stressing that DDR programs are not comprehensive post-war recovery efforts. Indeed, post-conflict situations should offer opportunities for creating social change involving both women and men, as opposed to simply supporting a return to rigid gender norms that often contributed to conflict and violence in the first place.

6. **Access, Targeting and Eligibility Criteria.** Women often face gender-specific constraints to accessing benefits provided by DDR programs. A central problem is the lack of an accepted or commonly used definition of “female combatant” or “female associated with fighting forces”, meaning that female target groups are defined on a country-by-country basis. The primary beneficiaries of the MDRP-supported programs are those people who operated within a military structure and actively engaged in preparing for armed conflict or actually used weapons. While the MDRP recognizes that most non-combatants associated with armed forces will also require support, this group of individuals is not a primary beneficiary of the program.

7. Other constraints identified include (a) an unwillingness of male commanders to report on the presence of women and girls in the fighting forces; (b) refusal on the part of male combatants to allow their wives/captives/domestic slaves to participate in DDR programs, and possibly leave them; (c) lack of information provided to those within fighting forces on accessing the programs; (d) fear of stigmatization, threat and abuse by community members if association with the fighting forces is made public; (e) safety concerns based on perceived and actual security threats at demobilization centers; and (f) inability to leave the forces due to ongoing armed conflict.

8. **Reintegration.** Male and female ex-combatants, as well as those associated with fighting forces, face gender-specific challenges during reintegration. Communities perceive men’s and women’s role and experiences in conflict differently, as well as their value, worth and role upon returning to the community. For girls and women, challenges are primarily due to negative perceptions of their experiences within fighting forces (women as sexually spoiled), reduced access to education or employment, and discrimination in terms of access to and control of land and other property. Women with children born to members of fighting forces may face stigma in their communities. Men often face their own stigmas (males as violent criminals) and constraints including pressures to provide economic support for their families based on the expectations that men meet the norm of family provider. In some cases, their inability to meet these roles may lead to men’s dependency on alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism.

9. **Sensitization and Communications.** The workshop findings demonstrated the central importance of improving sensitization and communications to address gender in national DDR programs. Priority groups include combatants and the receiving communities, commanders who have been the power brokers, and key national and international political officials. Gender and age need to be considered in designing and disseminating messages regarding DDR – with different messages to men and women, girls and boys. Different modalities can be used for sensitization and training, including:

(a) mainstreaming in existing training, reconciliation and other activities; and/or (b) specific gender trainings and sensitization.

10. **Capacity Building of National Program.** Lack of capacity to address gender national DDR programs was a common thread running through the presentations of all national programs. Each program will need to identify specific requirements based on the context and needs of each national program, but suggestions include hiring full-time gender experts in the program – with experience preferably of working from both a male and female perspective and involving experts early on to better plan and design interventions.

11. **Applied Research.** The workshop demonstrated the need for more applied research on gender aspects of DDR programs, particularly as it relates to working with men on gender issues. Men and boys face a number of specific demobilization and reintegration challenges, but there are only few gendered analyses of these challenges and even fewer policies and programs which address these issues from a gender perspective. Understanding and addressing root causes of men and boys' participation in armed conflict is a key element in dealing with and curbing individual and collective violent behavior. In the context of DDR programming, there have been few in-depth studies on the links between masculinity and violence. Increasing efforts to examine the gender-specific needs of men and boys may contribute to more successful reintegration processes and conflict mediation and prevention. Specific recommendations include:

- Supporting rigorous field-based research on masculinity, violence, and power relations within society and how these factors pertain to recruitment by fighting forces, ability to resist recruitment, demobilization, and reintegration;
- Drawing upon current gender research that looks at the populations involved in the armed conflict and in DDR programs to provide information on how to refine current programs to better address the needs of men and boys;
- Reviewing and adjusting current programming in light of the above research and findings.

I. INTRODUCTION

Workshop Background and Rationale

12. The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) for the greater Great Lakes Region was established in 2002 as a partnership to support the return of combatants to civilian life. The program is designed to contribute to peace and stabilization processes in the region by helping governments to meet their commitments, and – in so doing – helping to improve the security environment that allows for economic growth and development. The MDRP respects the national ownership of DDR programs and supports these programs through partnerships.¹ The MDRP’s overall gender strategy for demobilization and reintegration “is to provide equitable access to benefits to both male and female ex-combatants” in programming (Schroeder 2005, p. 2). The MDRP recognizes that special target groups, which most often include groups categorized as “vulnerable”, require “customized support” to ensure their needs are also met (Schroeder 2005, p. 2).

13. In order to examine the gender elements of the DDR process and identify mechanisms for addressing these in the context of the World Bank’s MDRP at the regional and national levels, a workshop was co-organized and co-hosted by the MDRP Secretariat and UNIFEM. The workshop was aimed at strengthening the MDRP-supported activities in the region and supporting joint learning within the MDRP partnership.

14. The national DDR programs and the MDRP face challenges in designing gender-appropriate reintegration support, assessing the gender dimensions of the social and economic assistance available to demobilized soldiers and members of armed groups, and in strengthening community participation and support for reintegration of both males and females. Furthermore, women’s contributive potential to the reintegration of persons formerly associated with fighting forces and other aspects of peace-building is recognized as a promising but largely untapped source for strengthening peace and security.

15. In order to help identify areas for increasing attention to the gender dimension within national DDR programs and strengthening gender-related action, UNIFEM and the MDRP Secretariat held a consultation workshop for approximately 80 participants, including seven national delegations (Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda) and representatives from UN and other multilateral bodies (UNICEF, UNDP, ONUB, MONUC, UNIFEM) and the MDRP Secretariat. In order to ground the workshop in the experiences of the recipient community and to involve partner agencies, other participants included key civil society partners, international experts on gender and DDR, and women ex-combatants from Burundi, Eritrea and Rwanda,. The workshop also

¹ MDRP target countries are Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

aimed to contribute to UNIFEM's Great Lakes Strategy of promoting gender equity in policymaking processes on peace and security.²

16. Prior to the workshop, the MDRP Secretariat contracted a desk review on the most salient gender dimensions of the programs undertaken by the MDRP and its national DDR partners (Schroeder 2005). In addition, country-level assessments were undertaken by the national DDR commissions to assess the design, implementation, management, monitoring and reporting of the national DDR programs and MDRP-funded special projects from a gender perspective. These assessments looked at past and on-going activities and outlined the main measures required to strengthen gender dimensions at the country level.

17. In addition to the MDRP and national DDR reports, several additional international documents were of relevance and helped to shape discussions at the workshop. In particular, participants referred to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognizes women's participation in national and regional processes and bi- and multi-lateral organizations as crucial to achieving and maintaining peace and security. This resolution calls for gender awareness in all aspects of peacekeeping initiatives, especially demobilization and reintegration, and encourages the informed and active participation of women in disarmament efforts.

18. The Cape Town Principles (CTPs) were also frequently referenced in the discussions. These principles define a child soldier as:

Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity including, but not limited to, cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. This includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms.

19. This definition is in line with the recognition by the world's leading child protection agencies that all children who have been involved with armed groups and forces have the right to be included in reintegration programs, not just those who carried weapons. The CTPs have been accepted by the MDRP partnership since its inception.

20. Finally, the draft of the UN Integrated Standards on DDR was referenced, as it contains the most current (and agreed upon) definitions and standards regarding women and children associated with fighting forces and groups. It also synthesizes current knowledge on key experiences for identifying and working with these populations.

² As part of the Great Lakes Strategy, UNIFEM advocates, in partnership with women's groups, gender-sensitive DDR programmes that take into account women's special needs for economic, physical and psychosocial support, skills training and reproductive health care.

Workshop Objectives

21. The overall objective of the workshop was to examine the gender elements of the DDR processes underway in the MDRP supported countries and to identify mechanisms for addressing these elements at the regional and national levels.
22. The immediate objectives of the workshop were to:
 - (a) To come to a consensus on the key gender issues to be monitored and addressed in DDR processes.
 - (b) To examine how gender is currently being addressed within the MDRP framework (national programs as well as special projects) including in the broader DDR phases supported by other actors (such as the PKOs), and to identify gaps and areas to be strengthened.
 - (c) To contribute to the knowledge base for gendering the DDR processes in the region and examine how to address remaining gaps, as well capacity constraints noted in (a) and (b).
 - (d) To formulate general principles and recommendations for applying a gender perspective in the MDRP and associated DDR processes, including how to address information gaps and capacity constraints.
 - (e) To identify a mechanism for monitoring the above recommendations.

Overview of Workshop Activities

23. The workshop lasted two and a half days. On the first day, the MDRP Secretariat gave a presentation on the Secretariat's approach to and initial experience with gender mainstreaming. UNIFEM presented on the UN Integrated DDR Standard for Women, Gender and DDR, focusing on definitions and eligibility criteria in the standards. An expert on masculinities presented on the role of masculinity and violence in conflict and the implications for DDR. Representatives of the national DDR structures from Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda presented on the results of country-level assessments. A series of case studies were then presented, including one regarding an organization of female ex-combatants in Rwanda, the experiences of Eritrean and Burundian women ex-combatants, and UNICEF/DRC's experiences with in-country and cross-border DDR with girls.

24. The second day began with group work on four key issues: (1) barriers facing women and girls in accessing DDR programs; (2) challenges of reintegration or reinsertion into civilian communities experienced by women and girls; (3) improving links and collaboration among national DDR, NGO and civil society initiatives; and (4) a discussion of masculinity, men and boys, which focused on better understanding the causes and drivers of armed conflict in regard to masculinities and on establishing new, non-violent roles for men and boys within communities. In the afternoon, participants

broke into country-specific working groups to identify key areas to improve programming through strengthening gender components and enhancing collaboration among the national commissions, women's organizations and UN partners. Each country working group developed recommendations on two or three strategic interventions that could become part of programming.

25. The third day was spent in plenary with presentations by the national DDR groups on challenges they are facing regarding creating and implementing gender-aware policies and programs. The MDRP Secretariat closed the workshop by summarizing key themes emerging over the preceding days and presented next steps for strengthening gender across the program.

II. OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

Opening Ceremony

26. Ms. Jeanine Kabano, representative of the State Minister in charge of social affairs in the Rwandese Ministry of Local Government, opened the proceedings and emphasized that promotion of gender equity in all aspects is a priority of the Government of Rwanda. She added that the issues on the workshop agenda were of great importance because of the imperative to engender the demobilization process in Rwanda. She ended by thanking the organizers of the workshop and wishing the participants fruitful deliberations. A number of distinguished guests were present at the opening ceremony.³

UNIFEM Opening Statements

27. Ms. Josephine Odera, UNIFEM Regional Programme Director for Central Africa, used her welcoming speech to highlight the importance of using gender perspectives to strengthen DDR processes. She stressed that UNIFEM considered it an important opportunity to co-host, along with the MDRP, this landmark consultation. She delivered a statement by UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer, in which Ms. Heyzer noted:

Peace in the Great Lakes Region, as elsewhere, hinges on transforming soldiers into citizens and the politics of war into the politics of democratic governance. Peace and democracy hinge on the equitable participation of women, men, boys and girls in all reconstruction processes, including demobilization and reintegration. The full participation of women in such processes requires that we vigilantly recognize and support women's leadership and their contributions to peace in their communities.

MDRP Secretariat Opening Presentation

28. Ms. Maria Correia, the Program Manager of the MDRP at the World Bank, stated that the workshop was a unique event for the World Bank, the MDRP Secretariat, national programs, and the DDR community as a whole. She noted that the MDRP in the Great Lakes Region is the largest DDR program in the world, working in seven countries and targeting up to 450,000 combatants, including former members of national armies, irregular groups and child soldiers. She said that the workshop offered an unprecedented opportunity to influence the way in which gender is addressed in DDR programming. She stated that the UN Security Council resolution 1325 and a number of recent studies on women and girls associated with fighting forces had helped to draw increased attention to issues of gender and DDR. The World Bank generated two of these studies,

³ The guests included Mr. Mohammed Touré, Country Manager of the World Bank for Rwanda, Moustapha Soumar, UNDP, Ambassador Richard Sezibera, Special Envoy of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda to the Great Lakes Region, Ms Fatuma Ntangiza, the Executive Secretary of the Rwandese Unity and Reconciliation Commission, Maria Correia, World Bank Program Manager for the MDRP Secretariat, and Josephine Odera, UNIFEM Regional Programme Director for Central Africa.

the first on issues of gender in demobilization and reintegration programs (World Bank 2002) and the second a review of gender in the MDRP's programs (Schroeder 2005).

29. The MDRP Manager noted that in considering gender and DDR, it was imperative to analyze how societal and cultural norms also affect men and their roles, relations and behavior, in order to understand how to address the roots of conflict. It is necessary to recognize that rigid gender norms and cultural practices also negatively affect men, particularly those who are poor, young and (relatively) powerless. Examples from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Rwanda illustrated how traditional male chiefs maintained power through patriarchal systems and practices that prevented younger men from being able to marry (and thus be considered adults). These practices helped to keep the younger men in a perpetual state of "youth" and therefore unable to effectively challenge the power of the older males in the clans. At the same time, the patriarchal power of the state denied the young men access to education, land and job opportunities. The resulting marginalization and mounting frustration by the young men were some of the reasons some joined rebel or militia factions.

30. Citing Northern Uganda as an example, she also discussed how mounting frustration at failure to achieve future goals (including marriage), idleness and hopelessness among young men in IDP and refugee camps could result in increased levels of alcohol and substance abuse, contributing in turn to physical abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence. She stated that the workshop needed to move beyond a conventional focus on women and girls to encompass a gender analysis that took into account women, men, girls and boys. She stressed that "recent studies have shown that realizing a vision of gender equality will be difficult if not impossible to achieve without understanding the full picture of gender, including how gender roles affect men and their behavior."

31. Ms. Correia concluded by emphasizing that DDR is one of a number of programs taking place within broader peace processes aimed to stabilize a conflict and post-conflict environments. DDR programs seek to achieve these objectives by (a) meeting some of the immediate economic and social needs of ex-combatants; and (b) creating alternatives to further participation in organized violence. She stressed that the MDRP philosophy operates on the premise of national ownership and that national actors have ultimate responsibility and accountability for decisions about DDR objectives, policies, strategies and program design and implementation – and this responsibility included all matters relevant to gender. She encouraged the participants in the workshop to work together to identify practical steps in applying gender perspectives in real DDR situations and in promoting learning, exchanges and partnerships among countries undergoing DDR.

III. CURRENT APPROACHES TO GENDER IN THE MDRP AND BEYOND

Gender and the MDRP

32. Mr. Kees Kingma from the MDRP Secretariat reiterated that the MDRP works as a partnership in support of national DDR processes currently underway in seven countries in the extended Great Lakes Region. He stated that the DDR programs were part of broader peace-building efforts linking peace, reconciliation, personal security, justice and development. He stressed that DDR programs are efforts to help stabilize the post-conflict environment by, in part, providing temporary assistance to ex-combatants as they transit from fighting forces into civilian life. The presenter highlighted that the MDRP supports the mainstreaming of gender perspectives throughout DDR processes and seeks to identify and address the special needs of women. He also noted that the MDRP endorses and tries to abide by the Cape Town Principles in its programming, with the caveat that in the end, national institutions and processes make the final determination for eligibility criteria in programs.

33. The presenter said that the primary target group of the MDRP is that of ex-combatants. In some phases of the DDR process, some assistance may be given to families of ex-combatants, such as transportation to relocation sites. The definition of a combatant depends on the specifics of the country, in some cases they are identified by lists drawn up by senior commanders and the definitions and numbers are often the result of peace agreements. UNICEF is usually a key partner regarding the demobilization of and reintegration support to children associated with fighting forces and groups. The presenter acknowledged a need to improve program design (for instance, with an emphasis on better assessing the ambitions of the ex-combatant beneficiaries in regard to the local labor markets) and also to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems. The presenter contended that, in the broad picture, assisting ex-combatants benefited peace processes, improved security, and helped in the realization of human rights, including the rights of women.

34. The presenter observed that there is no widely accepted or commonly used definition of “female combatant” or “female associated with fighting forces.” This meant that countries were deciding which females associated with fighting forces qualified for DDR programs on a country-by-country basis. The lower percentage of women and girls in DDR programs (as compared to estimates of force composition) could also be due to several factors, including a lack of recognition or prioritization by commanders who drew up the lists; perceived lack of security in demobilization sites by the women and girls themselves; insufficient awareness and procedures within the program to meet the needs of women and girls; and lack of female staffing in the relevant phases of the process.

35. The presenter said that the MDRP was aware that targeted assistance to ex-combatants has advantages and disadvantages and could indeed create resentment in broader war-affected populations. He stated the need to balance targeted support for ex-combatants with assistance to non-combatant (i.e., civilian) war-affected populations. Good coordination with other programs and synergies should be encouraged. Within this,

he stressed the need to share information with the receiving communities and provide encouragement and support to receiving communities. In particular, he saw a need for increased coordination with other assistance groups and receiving communities to address issues of violence, sensitization and acceptance.

Women, Gender and DDR: UNIFEM's Approaches

36. Sarah Douglas of UNIFEM highlighted the role of SC Resolution 1325 in informing UNIFEM's work in DDR processes, which, in paragraph 13, "encourages all those involved in planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male combatants and the needs of their dependents." She relayed that in October 2004, the UN Secretary-General urged those involved in DDR to develop guidelines and monitoring mechanisms to operationalize resolution 1325.

37. The presenter stated that current research finds that most DDR processes still are not taking gender fully into account. Some of the primary reasons for this include: (1) narrow definitions of combatants; (2) the inability of decision-makers to design DDR policy and programs that respond to the multiple roles of women and girls within armed forces and groups; and (3) limited resources, targeted primarily to male fighters. She said that studies find that many women and girls associated with fighting forces are not going through DDR processes but are instead self-demobilizing.⁴

38. The presenter spent the majority of her presentation addressing one of the primary barriers women and girls face in DDR programs: eligibility. Drawing from the newly drafted UN Integrated Standards on DDR (IDDRS), she said that although women and girls play numerous roles within fighting forces, it was possible to distinguish three main categories of roles. The first is 'dependents', i.e., the wives and children of male and female ex-combatants. The second category is 'armed combatants', which she defined as fighters with weapons, noting that DDR has mainly focused on this category of females. The third category is termed 'female supporters', those females involved in performing important support functions including nurses, cooks, porters, spies, administrators, translators, and domestic and sexual workers. The presenter then went over the IDDRS checklist to determine eligibility for females associated with fighting forces to determine at what stage, if any, they are eligible to enter the DDR process. She proposed that female supporters should be eligible to enter the DDR stage at demobilization, arguing that the DDR process may dismantle the material and, at times, security support systems that these women and girls have developed while with the fighting forces.

39. The presenter stressed that DDR processes should reflect equity of participation of males and females associated with the fighting forces. She highlighted the need to strengthen the mechanisms used to collect information on force composition. She also encouraged those planning and implementing DDR processes to take into account the needs of the communities into which the ex-combatants were to be reintegrated. Finally,

⁴ The term "self-demobilize" refers to any member of a fighting force or group who reintegrates directly to a community, by-passing all formal DDR programs.

she identified a series of challenges that included issues of justice and DDR, in particular how to address the fact that many of those participating in the DDR process have committed gross human rights violations, how to transform violent masculinities that developed during the conflict, and how to address the needs of female dependents who may or may not want to remain with male ex-combatants.

Masculinity, Violence and Conflict

40. Professor Robert Morell, an expert on men and masculinity from the University of KwaZulu/Natal, South Africa, presented on masculinity, violence and armed conflict. He emphasized that masculinity studies were grounded in feminist critiques of patriarchy and focused on issues of women's emancipation, ending male violence against women and other men, and an analysis of the negative and positive aspects of masculinity. He presented a brief history of masculinity studies, which began in the 1980s and by 1990s was engaged in international issues of masculinity and men in peace-building, peace and democracy. He highlighted international men's movements in which men joined with other men, as well as with women's organizations and movements, to end sexual and gender-based violence.

41. The presenter then turned his attention to men, violence and armed conflict. He argued that while there is a strong correlation between men and violence, not all men are violent, and even violent men are not violent all the time. He said that there are particular constructions of masculinity that promote or legitimate male violence. These constructions become most dangerous when they dominate an entire society and become hegemonic among the majority of the population. Further, there are certain societal institutions, such as armies and the police, which are prone to presenting violence as a legitimate form of conflict-resolution and as a legitimate means of expressing maleness or masculinity. Fortunately, there are constructions of masculinity that are non-violent, even among those who behave violently, that could be drawn on to promote alternative non-violent forms of masculinity. For example, the fierce warrior can be a caring father and considerate community member.

42. The challenge facing people who work to promote peace and democracy is to prevent conflict (which is an ever-present condition of life) from escalating into violence. The presenter contended that this can be done, in part, by giving men skills in anger management, conflict mediation and negotiation. It can also be done by creating discourses of non-violence and by giving public visibility to peace and peaceful men. He stressed, however, that this transformation needs to occur at two different levels, the personal level – where men are helped to deal with their pain, guilt, frustration and sadness – and the institutional level – where gender equity becomes a central part of organizational and institutional culture.

43. The presenter stated that gender equity includes rather than excludes men. Gender equity gives men a place in society and validates particular styles of masculinity and positive forms of men's work. It helps men to have dignity by respecting the contributions they make to their families and communities. It involves actively working to find new ways—non-violent, non-sexist ways—of being a man. All gender work must

recognize the interdependence of men and women, old and young. At times there is a need to treat men and women separately or to work with combatants and non-combatants in isolation, but ultimately the goal must be to generate harmonious relations among these different sectors. The presenter stressed that while DDR processes do not appear to have sufficiently addressed the presence and experiences of females associated with fighting forces, most likely they had also not fully come to terms with men's and boys' experiences as males associated with fighting forces.

IV. THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS ON GENDER AND DDR

44. Four concurrent working groups were held to discuss the issues that participants identified as the primary challenges facing the national DDR processes from a gender perspective.

GROUP 1

Barriers to Women's and Girls' Access to DDR

45. Group 1 discussed factors hindering the access of women and children to DDR programs. Factors that the group highlighted in preventing access include a lack of transparency within fighting forces to provide accurate force number and composition figures, poor security, fear of stigmatization of being labeled a 'combatant' or 'rebel', mis- or incomplete information about programs, inconsistent program definitions for 'combatant', and ongoing conflict.

46. Likewise, the MDRP Gender Desk Study found that a lack of clarity in defining eligibility criteria for DDR benefits within both MDRP documents and country programming at times prevented qualified beneficiaries from gaining access to programs. According to the Gender Desk Study, formalizing guidelines and criteria to establish practical definitions of female ex-combatants could improve the identification of all female ex-combatants and associated groups. Importantly, the Gender Desk Study found that success in outreach programming targeting women and girls associated with fighting forces (as non ex-combatants) was directly related to the amount of resources allocated for such programming. These resources are required early in developing DDR programs in order for researchers to collect relevant information on the roles and numbers of women and girls associated with fighting forces.

47. In addition to efforts to reverse the abovementioned factors, Group 1 recommended: including community-based initiatives to identify target groups; ensuring proper allocation of funds to fully support programming; promoting donor and high level political advocacy at peace negotiations on access to programs; proving early planning to address and anticipate needs of dependents of beneficiaries; avoiding stigma and minimize fear by targeting "separated children" or creating "women's centers"; and creating community-based programs to prevent re-recruitment. It was further recommended that any emphasis on gaining access to target groups should include rights-based initiatives grounded in supporting national and customary law.

48. The MDRP Gender Desk Study also found that community-based programming and support was the cornerstone of effective interventions. Findings also indicated that, because no county had done its own assessment of the potential special needs of women and girls, the initial design of programs within the countries did not include any consideration of special needs.

GROUP 2

Reintegration

49. The central challenges to reintegration identified by Group 2 include unclear strategies and approaches on gender issues by DDR programs. The most often cited challenge had to do with issues of stigma and rejection of ex-combatants and those known to have formerly been associated with the fighting forces, with particularly strong stigma against women and girls. Other issues were raised about gendered cultural barriers that may prevent access to land, employment, education or other similar opportunities for women and girls. Problems of drug and alcohol addiction among ex-combatants were also noted. It was recommended by the group that gender sensitization initiatives to help assist in lessening stigma and rejection of women and girls be carried out with the cooperation and involvement of local leaders. In addition, there is a need to develop specific training modules for female ex-combatants and those formerly associated with the fighting forces on human rights and HIV/AIDS. Importantly, the group recommended that the specific needs of males and females need to be clearly identified concerning issues of skills training, health, psychological assistance, family planning, land access and drug abuse prevention.

50. The MDRP Gender Desk Study found that reintegration programs must take proper account of the specific needs of both men and women. The Gender Desk Study recommended listening to the opinions and experiences of women and girls who had participated in DDR programs, as well as taking into account the voices of those who were excluded; this would strengthen the programs and ensure they are better adapted to the specific needs. The study also found that national programs have not always had success in ensuring equal benefits for both genders, particularly regarding women and girls. The study again found that for women and girls associated with fighting forces, broad-based community development was the most effective way to address gender concerns relating to social reintegration and poverty reduction.

GROUP 3

Improving Linkages and Collaboration among National and International Actors

51. Group 3 identified a number of concerns regarding linkages and collaborative efforts undertaken by government and non-governmental agencies that encounter or work with ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with the fighting forces. When ensuring coordination of field interventions, the group highlighted the need for increased, regular attention to issues of development, reconstruction and reintegration. Furthermore, the group pointed out that each country case requires different specifications influenced by geographical barriers, variations in the presence of state control or authority, varying degrees of gender integration in programs, and differences between informal and formal armies. The group also noted the inherent complications of multiple national and international actors coordinating numerous projects in volatile environments.

52. The group recommended that a number of initiatives should underscore future programming in an effort to strengthen linkages and collaboration: (1) reinforce national and local institutions in order to ensure inclusive coordination between field actors; (2) practice gender equity in policy and programs, including through awareness campaigns among community members regarding socio-economic reintegration; (3) strive for community-based approaches in all programs and projects, particularly in reintegration activities; (4) help to ensure coordination with national poverty reduction programs, humanitarian interventions and local initiatives by creating and maintaining databases of all intervention work.

53. The Gender Desk Study found that civil society groups could have an increased role in supporting DDR programming. It reported that gender experts are needed to help in the development of national strategies. However, in addition to gender experts, working with civil society groups as implementing partners, particularly women's groups, was recommended as a way to help identify and meet the needs of women and girls. In addition, the study found that government ministries and agencies concerned with women's issues could play an important and proactive role in gender-responsive programming.

GROUP 4

Gender Perspectives: Specific Challenges for Men and Boys

54. Group 4 focused on three issues: (1) gender specific challenges for men and boys in reintegration; (2) the likely causes for male violence during and after reintegration; and (3) key strategies for addressing these concerns. The group discussed gender specific challenges in DDR programs, particularly men's roles and expectations as family providers, and emphasized that some men may engage in violent expression of their frustrations when unable to perform this role. Additionally, the group pointed out a number of potential causes for the breakdown of the reintegration process for men and boys, which in turn increase the possibility of re-recruitment or criminal behavior. These risk factors include poverty, lack of land and community/family rejection.

55. The group determined that further gender research investigating positive reintegration strategies and outcomes in different countries would be beneficial in helping to create and promote new non-violent roles for men, whereby men are able to reassess their values through social and economic training aimed at easing their readjustment to civilian life. Finally, the group found that in an effort to understand the violent behavior of men and boys, it is important to understand the root causes of this violence as acted out through participation in fighting forces and groups. Greater understanding of this issue may enable proper psycho-social and community support and may ultimately reduce the likelihood of recurrent individual or collective violence by these men and boys.

56. The MDRP Gender Desk Study examined if DDR programs had adequately met the needs of men, noting that these are linked to those of women, as they are part of the same families and communities. The MDRP technical annex recognizes that benefits for ex-combatants must be equally accessible to men and women. The Gender Desk Study

found that the gender difficulties of men have important implications for both men and women during the reintegration phase, including the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. The study noted that there have been instances in which DDR programming for women, which was believed to have excluded men, produced negative results. Further studies are underway to look at the role of gender and men in DDR processes.

Discussion

57. Participants raised questions about the composition of the national DDR commissions, in particular regarding whether women were present on the commissions and if any of them were ex-combatants. Several participants highlighted the need for national DDR commissions to be aware of and address issues of gender discrimination that many women ex-combatants would face upon reintegration. Questions were raised about how national DDR commissions defined ex-combatants and who qualified to participate in the programs. There was discussion regarding how long DDR programs should run, with some saying DDR programs were a short-term, specifically focused program, and how long ex-combatants should identify as ex-combatants before moving on to other ways of defining themselves.

V. CASE STUDIES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

58. Group members then presented a series of cases studies that employed gender perspectives to highlight the opportunities and challenges in DDR processes in the greater Great Lakes Region. The cases studies included responses by female ex-combatants in the post-conflict situations in Rwanda, Burundi, and Eritrea. UNICEF country offices also presented on their work with girls associated with fighting forces in Burundi, DRC, and in cross-border cases involving the DRC and Rwanda.

Rwanda: The Experience of Female ex-Combatants

59. Ms. Espérance Kanani, a member of the Administrative council of the Ndabaga Association explained that her association is comprised of women and girls who participated in the 1994-95 Rwandan war. The Association began in 2003 with the objective of ensuring the self-reintegration of female ex-combatants in the absence of official structures capable of reintegrating them into civilian life. The presenter said that there are many female ex-combatants scattered throughout the country who never went through any demobilization procedures. These women have discovered that they face similar problems, mainly related to unemployment, sickness, HIV/AIDS, lack of finances to begin income-generating projects, lack of scholarships to finish their formal educations, lack of non-military professional training, lack of shelter, and the inability to provide education for their children. The Ndabaga Association is now active in forming and training members on cooperatives with the intention of creating a networking system at the provincial and national levels in order to facilitate training and an exchange of information with the goal of poverty reduction.

Burundi: The Experience of Female ex-Combatants

60. Ms. Chantal Manirakiza of the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD) Alliance des Femmes (Burundi) shared the experience of women ex-combatants in Burundi. She said that upon returning to their communities, many of these women were abandoned by their families. She said the women and girls lack education and grew up without knowing their parents or family. Many of them are in desperate need of economic support. She stated that she appreciated the workshop because it was an opportunity for her to realize that the problems and aspirations of Burundi's female ex-combatants are shared by women and girls in the fighting forces in other countries.

Eritrea: The Experience of Female ex-Combatants

61. Ms. Worku Zerai, an ex-combatant from Eritrea, shared the experience of Eritrean female ex-combatants. She relayed that women were historically part of the army; before independence a third of the Eritrean army troops were women. At the time the presenter joined the army for Eritrean independence, she reported that the army was very disciplined and had strict rules against sexual and gender-based violence. After achieving independence, the demobilization program reduced the army's size and budget and removed 54,000 women and 16,000 men from the military's ranks. Demobilized men and women received the same benefits, including cash, food, training, credit,

psychosocial support and access to farm land. Notably, only ex-combatants qualified for these benefits. However, a program evaluation was carried out in 2005 that questions the effectiveness of the demobilization program. The evaluation found that 40% of the women ex-combatants were unemployed and some had been remobilized. A number of women ex-combatants were forced to comply with the gender norms they had abandoned, for example, Muslim women veiled again, and nearly half of those who previously had not circumcised their girl children had now done so. The presenter further stated that many of the women ex-combatants appeared to have resigned themselves to male domination in their lives, and some turned to sex work to survive. On a more positive note, a smaller number of women ex-combatants held leadership positions and over 60% of the demobilized women have respectable jobs and were providing educational opportunities for their children.

UNIFEM Burundi Assessment

62. Marie Nduwayo of UNIFEM—Burundi presented on the association *Dushirehamwe*, which has the objective of strengthening women's roles in the peaceful resolution of the Burundi conflict. Her presentation highlighted the role that civil society can play in assisting and reinforcing the objectives of DDR. She stated that the Association has primarily been involved in the sensitization of communities to receive women ex-combatants in their villages and also in training women in various sectors. She said that her association openly sought partnership with other organizations on topics of shared interest.

Demobilization and Reintegration of Girls in Burundi - UNICEF

63. A member of UNICEF, Burundi presented on the demobilization and reintegration of girls in Burundi. The presenter stated that demobilization and reintegration activities for child combatants in Burundi began in January 2004. The goals of the national program, supported in partnership with UNICEF, were to demobilize children in the armed forces and groups, reunify these children with their families, prevent future recruitment, and hold the recruiting parties accountable for ensuring full demobilization of child combatants. Between January and August 2004, 2,278 child soldiers were demobilized from the national armed forces and civil defense forces, of which 26 were girls. The demobilization strategies did not include interim care centers and focused on direct family reunification, in part because many of the children came from civil defense forces and were already located in their home communities. The program provided a variety of interventions, ranging from benefits (such as bedding or food) received directly by the child to benefits for the receiving community at large, with particular emphasis on preparing receiving families and communities for the return of their children, and supporting educational and learning opportunities and youth participation initiatives.

64. Only a few girls participated in the official DDR program. Some of the central challenges facing girls formerly associated with the fighting forces were gender and sexual-based violence, psychosocial problems, high levels of sexual promiscuity, and stigmatization from the community. In best practices for working with girls associated

with fighting forces, the UNICEF presenter recommended listening closely to girls to help identify their needs and priorities, which may require providing safe forums where girls can come to talk and seek assistance. The presenter also highlighted the need to provide the girls with new experiences that will change their identification with the fighting forces and help them to regain faith in their decision-making ability. The presenter said that the girls prioritized opportunities for education and training and the creation of associations to assist in income-generating activities. Finally, the presenter stressed the need to provide medical assistance and sensitization, especially concerning HIV/AIDS.

Demobilization and Reintegration of Girls in DRC - UNICEF

65. UNICEF-DRC presented the findings of a recent study on girls associated with fighting forces in the DRC (Verhey 2004). Supported by UNICEF, the study was conducted in the eastern provinces of DRC between December 2003 and September 2004. The study found that very few girls were demobilized through official demobilization channels. At the same time, many girls were known to be associated with the fighting forces, for example, demobilized boys reported that girls comprised 30-40% of the children in their armed groups. The study found that most of the girls associated with the fighting forces were forcibly recruited. The study also found that a number of girls that had been recruited by foreign fighting forces have since disappeared. The study concluded that girls who had voluntarily joined armed forces and groups had, in some cases, been encouraged by their communities to join, as communities viewed recruitment as positive and patriotic. Other girls joined because of conflict within their own families or in search of food and security.

66. The presenter continued that according to the study, communities perceive girls who have been associated with fighting forces as sexually experienced (through either abuse or consent), and which decreases the desirability of these young women as potential marriage partners. Community members also assume that these girls carry high rates of communicable sexual diseases. Some members of communities also fear that if the girls have escaped from their captors, the presence of the girls may put the community at risk. In some cases, it was reported that the family may prefer that the girls stay with their captors, particularly if the girls have given birth, as the child is seen as a burden and perhaps a future rebel.

67. The presenter observed that, in the experience of UNICEF-DRC, the military has little understanding of or respect for the Cape Town Principles. He reported that girls associated with fighting forces are considered wives and property, and are often not released for demobilization. Additionally, on the part of those demobilizing the forces, the primary duties carried out by most girls (e.g., cooking, carrying, and domestic work) are considered non-military duties and thus the girls are not considered to be combatants in need of demobilization.

68. The presenter returned to the study findings and explained that according to the girls interviewed for the study, most fear to leave their military partners due to social, economic and cultural influences. The study found that a number of the girls do not

attempt to access assistance programs that would identify them as former captives associated with fighting forces. Girls who had already left the fighting forces reported that their colleagues still in the forces would most likely wish to leave if they were informed of alternative options in a discrete and sensitive way. It found that most of the girls already reinserted in the community need support to overcome isolation, stigmatization and marginalization. The study concluded with a series of concrete recommendations on the best way to achieve the reintegration of these girls in the community.

VI. ASSESSMENTS BY NATIONAL DELEGATIONS: PROGRAM OVERVIEW, KEY GENDER CHALLENGES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND INDICATORS

69. A member from each national DDR commission delegation presented his or her commission's assessment of their programming. Each presenter gave an overview of the general DDR program and then highlighted how the program addressed the needs of women and girl ex-combatants and the key gender challenges that arose. Later at the workshop itself, participants then broke into country-specific working groups to devise recommendations on how to address the gender challenges in their DDR programs, as well as to recommend indicators that would help gauge the success of meeting those challenges. For the purposes on this workshop report, the material on the country presentations and from the recommendations and indicators developed during the in-workshop country-specific working groups is presented together.

Angola

Program Overview

70. The Angola Demobilization and Reintegration Program (ADRP) had three key objectives: (1) to demobilize 105,000 ex-combatants from the armed opposition group (UNITA) and 33,000 from the government of Angola's armed forces (FAA); (2) to provide support and economic assistance to all ex-combatants; (3) to reallocate the government's military expenses to social and economic sectors. The demobilization program operated from September to October 2002. The remainder of the program was carried out over a 36-month period which ended in late 2005.

Key Gender Challenges

71. From its inception, the ADRP faced challenges ensuring that women and girls had equitable access to the program. To illustrate, in an assessment of combatants eligible for entry into the DDR process, out of 30,000 people in the ex-UNITA forces, only 60 females, or 0.2%, were identified. However, the ADRP was aware that recent data indicated that a larger number of women had been part of UNITA. Once in the program, women and men received equal benefits. Eligible ex-combatants were given a choice of reintegration options most appropriate to their needs, aspirations, interests and skills. These included vocational training or apprenticeships, employment, assistance for agricultural activities, procurement of working tools and education. In addition to women ex-combatants, widows of combatants that had been demobilized and registered in the FAA database were also eligible for benefits, as were wives of disabled ex-combatants. The ADRP did not include specific and different budget lines for women as all projects were theoretically designed without sex distinction. However, the ADRP encouraged, where possible, that women comprise a minimum of 5% of total beneficiaries and that sub-projects should include activities more typically appropriate for women, such as dressmaking, embroidery, cooking, baking and hairdressing.

72. Recognizing that it cannot on its own address the many needs of women and girls associated with fighting forces, the Angola team reported that it is supportive of efforts of the Ministry of Family and Women's Promotion to finalize a strategy for a multi-sector program to address some of the key outstanding needs of women. These programs are to focus on poverty reduction, education, health care, rights of citizenship and reduction of gender violence. Additionally, the national DDR commission was supportive of NGOs that have proposed some projects for women and girls directly involved in the fighting forces who were left out of the official DDR process.

Recommendations and Indicators

73. The working group on Angola decided that there should be additional emphasis on providing services to the ex-combatants, including women ex-combatants, the spouses of ex-combatants and boy and girl ex-combatants. Recommended services included psychosocial assistance, education, training, rehabilitation and assistance to those with physical and mental problems, micro-credit, and services for small income generating activities. They identified several primary constraints that the current programs were facing, such as challenges in the dissemination of information, sensitization of receiving communities, particularly in regard to returning females, and mobilization of partners to participate in the program. The working group also recommended improving systems of information dissemination, referral and counseling. The group recommended redefining the geographical areas in which their programs functioned. They also recommended that within those areas criteria be developed for engaging with eligible partners and that the partners be actively engaged to work to meet the programming goals.

74. In regard to strengthening gender components within the national DDR programs, the working group recommended reinforcing the prioritizing of gender perspectives at all levels. The working group recommended the hiring of a technical team to assist in shaping future programming with a strong gender perspective. The group also recommended gender training for key staff members and building capacity in the national DDR partners in order to ensure better identification of gender issues. The group's list of indicators to be tracked to measure success included the number of women and children beneficiaries in the programs, the final destination of the targeted group, and the development of a gender guide for programming design and implementation.

Burundi

Program Overview

75. Information was presented on the conflict in Burundi, the Burundi peace process and the different ceasefire agreements that eventually established the National Program for Disarmament, Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration (PNDRR) of Burundi. The PNDRR was tasked with: (a) the DDRR of the armed opposition groups (party to the peace accords) and the pro-government militia forces; (b) assisting in guiding the creation of a new national army and police force; and (c) contributing to the reallocation of resources from military expenditures to the health and education sectors. Over 85,000 combatants are thought to exist, of which 55,000 are anticipated to pass through the

PNDRR. Within the larger ex-combatant population, three groups were identified that required special attention: women ex-combatants, child ex-combatants and disabled ex-combatants. Although no figures were given on women's overall participation in the PNDRR, it was reported that in October 2005, out of 14,000 demobilized fighters, 438 (3%) were women. Also, of the 6,744 forces that were demobilized and integrated into the National Police, 231 (3%) were women.

Key Gender Challenges

76. The presenter explained that the national commission's assessment found that in the pre-demobilization phases, ex-combatants were informed of their civil and human rights with particular reference to women's human rights. The assessment found that in the DDR programming female ex-combatants were given separate accommodation in the demobilization centers, and that security measures were put in place to help assure the women's personal security at those centers. The assessment stressed that there was an active dissemination of information and training for implementers regarding the eligibility of women ex-combatants to participate in the program. The assessment found that the importance of equality of men and women in the execution of all reintegration activities and equality of opportunities in economic and social reintegration was emphasized by the national commission to the PNDRR personnel and local leaders in the receiving communities. The assessment reported that specialized psychosocial assistance was also available to women and girls and that the national commission had tasked the PNDRR personnel to better monitor the reintegration programs and report on and respond to any setbacks. It was noted that during the monitoring, issues of stigmatization of some women were found, most notably among single mothers, young mothers with children born from relations with fighters, and women formerly associated with fighting forces who were rejected by their husbands upon their return. It was also noted that the national commission for the PNDRR had convened an additional workshop aimed at identifying the needs and capacities of women ex-combatants, which brought together thirty female ex-combatants with the purpose of recommending changes to the PNDRR program.

Recommendations and Indicators

77. The working group highlighted that the PNDRR still has areas in which attention to gender needs to be strengthened, both at the institutional and executing levels. The Burundi working group recommended the appointment of a gender specialist at the decision-making level of SE/CNDRR. The group noted that, currently, the PNDRR lacks a special unit in charge of female ex-combatants. The presenter stated that the PNDRR would benefit from an increase in qualified female staff. Noting the need for resources to strengthen gender within the PNDRR, the working group recommended increased dialogue with the donors in order to reallocate the budgets to allow reframing of programs using gender perspectives, particularly for reintegration programs. Indicators suggested for helping to measure progress on these goals included contracts of employment for gender specialists with the PNDRR, reconsideration of the gendered aspects of programming by TDR and partners, a strategy for budget reallocation to consider gender aspects of DDR, and the availability of budgetary lines for gender programming.

Central African Republic

Program Overview

78. No program overview was presented.

Key Gender Challenges

79. The CAR national DDR commission recognized that they had not considered gender in their planning and programming up until now.

Recommendations and Indicators

80. The CAR working group requested technical support to revise the national program to consider gender equity with an emphasis on documenting the gender dimensions facing the ex-combatants and understanding the different needs of women, men, boy and girl ex-combatants.

The Democratic Republic of Congo

Program Overview

81. The DRC continues to experience armed conflict. The first programmatic DDR initiatives began in late 2004, when the UN peacekeeping operation MONUC arrived with the mission of establishing some stability in the region. Shortly thereafter, the National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization and Repatriation, Reinsertion and Reintegration (DDRRR), in cooperation with MONUC and UNDP, was tasked with carrying out the disarmament of international forces within the DRC, armed opposition groups, and irregular forces, including militias. The DDRRR also aimed to assist in the reform and reorganization of the national army and police forces.

Key Gender Challenges

82. A series of gender disparities were identified within the existing DDRRR program. Most notable was the lack of provisions for dependants of male ex-combatants, and in particular the failure to provide accommodation, food, medical care or transport to dependant women and children during both demobilization and reinsertion. The failure to adequately consider elderly, female and child dependents in the planning and execution of demobilization and reinsertion programs means that these population groups were often negatively affected by the programs.

83. The presenter explained that, as in other countries, women and girls in the DRC were associated with fighting forces in a variety of roles, including as combatants, spies, porters, cooks, nurses, sex workers, and forced and voluntary wives. There also exists a group of women and children who were abandoned by forces from other countries that were active in the DRC for a period of time during the war. Few of these girls and women have entered the DDRRR processes. Furthermore, the presenter stated that although it was known that many girls were associated with the fighting forces in the

DRC, almost none had participated in official DDRRR processes. Most women and girls are therefore self-demobilizing. At the same time, there exists very little connection between the DDRRR program and other existing humanitarian and development programs that might pick up this population of women and children.

Recommendations and Indicators

84. The DRC working group recommended several strategies to improve the access of women and girls to the PNDDR program, including: strong programming and sensitization within PNDDR on the rights of women and girls and creating awareness of human rights in community programs; the adoption of systematic gender analysis in community reinsertion programs; improving collaboration and cooperation with other existing programs through better sharing of existing data on on-going projects and programs and reinforcing partnerships with operational field actors; improving support to dependants of ex-combatants (basic needs, such as adequate nutrition, water, health care and transportation) and improving links to other national humanitarian and development programs (e.g., PNMLS, DSRP, PMURR) and community recovery projects (reconstruction, health, sexual violence and child protection); initiatives to support victims of gender-based violence; increasing the number of female staff and recruiting full-time gender specialists to assist the technical teams. The working group also recommended strengthening the tools used to identify and reach women and girls associated with fighting forces and increasing support for socio-economic reintegration actions aimed at preventing violence against women and children during and after armed conflict. However, this would occur outside the PNDDR and MDRP framework.

The Republic of Congo

Program Overview

85. In the Republic of Congo, the DDR process for ex-combatants has consisted of three major programs. The PNUD/OIM project, which ran from July 2000 through November 2002, reinserted 8,019 ex-combatants into society, but the ratio of women to men could not be determined from the data provided. A subsequent emergency project of demobilization and reinsertion (PDR) ran from October 2002 to February 2005 and served 9,884 ex-combatants, of which 297 (3%) were women. A smaller specific DDR project, called DDR/Pool began in March 2005 and served 442 beneficiaries, of which only 7 were women (1.6 %).

86. The national DDR projects discussed above have four components: disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and security. The reintegration aspects of the programs include micro-economic activities and income generating schemes. The programs also offer medical and psychological assistance. (Information was not provided on the other aspects of the program).

Key Gender Challenges

87. Four categories of women requiring special support were identified: (a) primary combatants; (b) women who provided domestic and other services to the fighting forces, (c) women who registered for DDR while accompanying wounded combatants or those in cantonment sites, and (d) those forcibly held by the fighting forces, including as sexual slaves, domestic slaves or forced wives. At the same time, the national DDR commission recognized the challenges inherent in trying to develop programming for the broad range of diverse individuals within these four categories (e.g. MDRP eligibility criteria only provide for women combatants and their dependents). As noted, the number of women who entered the programs was low. The presenter explained that this was primarily because society has rejected ex-combatants, and therefore many women who were associated with the fighting forces have sought to distance themselves from these groups, including avoiding any sort of official program in the DDR process. Furthermore, the subsidies given in the programs were believed to be too low to serve as an incentive for participation and the implementation of the programs was considered extremely slow.

Recommendations and Indicators

88. The working group on the Republic of Congo recommended enhancing the overall capacity of DDR programs to better serve both men and women. The group recommended mobilizing women to participate in designing the implementation of different DDR programs. Within this strategy, recommendations were made to use existing avenues within civil society—such as churches, NGOs and civic associations—to promote the reintegration of women associated with fighting forces. The group highlighted the need for increased budgets to cover awareness-raising activities and for programming to better address the key social challenges faced by ex-combatants. A specific recommendation was made to the Government of the Republic of Congo to establish a direct link between the Department of Integration and Promotion of Women and the national DDRR program. The monitoring indicators suggested by the working group included the number of ex-combatants who were aware of the DDR program, the number who participates in the program, the number of seminars and trainings organized, and the existence of a budgetary line within the national programs for programming for women ex-combatants.

Rwanda

Program Overview

89. The Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Program (RDRP) occurred in two stages: Stage 1 began in 1997 and Stage 2 began in 2001. To date, 54,159 ex-combatants have participated in the program, including 334 females (0.06%) and 2,927 child ex-combatants.

Key Gender Challenges

90. The presenter reported that during the demobilization phase, adult males and females were together in a common discharge center. Within the center, there were separate facilities to cater for special needs of women ex-combatants (such as sanitary

facilities) and to enhance their security. Girl and boy child ex-combatants were housed separately from the adults. During the reinsertion phase, all adult ex-combatants who entered the program received equal reinsertion packages and grants (regardless of gender), children were provided with special take-home kits, and all participants were given equal opportunities to make decisions about their reintegration and received support for these choices (within given cost constraints). Women received preferential access to the Voluntary Support Window (VSW) (i.e. 100%), as opposed to 60% and 40% for Stage I and II men. Among lessons learned and applied: from 2004 onwards, VSW for women was managed on a separate track by a gender officer at HQ as opposed to at the community level, helping to counter reports of bias against women at the CDC level. DDR program organizers also implemented a series of projects which specifically targeted women and girl ex-combatants, including support to associations of children and women ex-combatants and engaging female ex-combatants in HIV/AIDS sensitization programs throughout the country.

91. Because so few women and girls participated in the official DDR program, the presenter reported that the monitoring of these individuals was relatively easy. Importantly, because the on-going DDR program for women and girls in Rwanda is set up in response to the cross-border issues of fighters within the DRC, the presenter stressed that the national commission was calling for increased awareness and cooperation from MONUC and other humanitarian actors within the DRC. The presenter reported that female ex-combatants were found to be generally more focused and used their benefits more rationally than their male counterparts, and that both female and child ex-combatants were generally eager and able to learn. At the same time, the presenter said the national commission was aware that women and girl ex-combatants faced a number of gender-specific constraints within the DDR process. These constraints included stigmatization upon re-entering communities based on traditional notions of women's acceptable roles and the myth that only men are fighters. In addition, the presenter said that the women and girls had missed out on education and the acquisition of other important skills, and they were often re-entering communities in which few economic opportunities exist for women. Furthermore, some had psychological disorders due to their experiences in the fighting forces.

92. The lessons learned by the national commission in their assessment included the need for early identification of psychological disorders and the design of support mechanisms to handle these issues. The national commission also recognized that women and girl ex-combatants needed special sessions during demobilization that were oriented to their specific needs and that they should have preferential access to VSW. There was also recognition of a need to build gender awareness within recipient communities and to actively involve community members in the reintegration of female ex-combatants.

93. The Rwanda working group agreed that one of the primary challenges was the limited capacity of national DDR commission and program and local partners in understanding and appreciating gender issues. The working group noted that the fundamental challenge is that women, girls and boys are denied their right to access the national DDR because MONUC is facing constraints in executing its mandate on women

(which flow from SC Res. 1325). The limited capacity of national DDR commission is therefore identified as a secondary challenge that needs follow-up action. To illustrate, the group noted that the current prepared need is to receive up to 8500 ex-combatants from armed groups in the DRC. Even a modest assumption that 15% per cent of these would be women would lead to a project caseload of 1275 female ex-combatants.

94. Looking specifically at the current programs, the working group highlighted the knowledge gaps around the gender composition of the armed groups. There was discussion on the need to take concrete steps, such as assisting MONUC in carrying out more accurate assessments of the groups, as well as working with MONUC to clarify its position on the feasibility of delivering such assistance. In the mean time, preparedness of the RDRC to plan for provision of gender appropriate benefits could be enhanced by adopting an assumed ratio of 15 per cent female combatants.

95. The group also highlighted concerns regarding the impacts of DDR on the families of ex-combatants, which have been taken into account in the process design and for which it was recommended that additional studies be conducted. In addition, there were concerns about the depth and breath of psycho-social problems for both men and women ex-combatants, for which a study has been commissioned and for which the group recommended the development and execution of a comprehensive policy to handle psychosocial problems.

Recommendations and Indicators

96. The working group recommended additional assistance to more accurately establish the gender composition of armed groups. They recommended a series of next steps, including a study on the impact of DDR on family and community life from a gender perspective. The group also recommended the development and execution of a comprehensive policy to handle psychosocial problems, as well as increased training for RDRP staff and local partners on gender issues. The group recommended monitoring indicators included the submission of a report on the impact of DDR on family life; an up-to-date report on the gender composition of armed groups not yet demobilized; an operational contract with psychosocial service providers; and a report on gender training of staff and local partners.

Uganda

Program Overview

97. The Amnesty Commission of Uganda is charged with overseeing the program that offers blanket amnesty to all persons who have engaged in armed conflict against the government of Uganda since 1986. The Commission is responsible for the disarmament, resettlement and reintegration of all persons who qualify for amnesty. The work of the Commission began in 2000 and is currently on-going.

Key Gender Challenges

98. At present, most of those seeking amnesty (called `reporters`) do so in Northern Uganda, where ongoing conflict continues to impede the Amnesty Commission's access to target groups. Due to lack of security and other factors, the Amnesty Commission does not have accurate information on the number of females who might be eligible for amnesty. The Amnesty Commission believes that a lack of security for reporters is a primary reason many do not apply for benefits packages, as they do not want to risk threats by both community members and the rebel armed group if their status is made public. Many women and girls fear stigmatization due to their association with opposition fighting forces and therefore choose not to access formal programming, including the resettlement and reintegration packages.

99. Women and girls who have children fathered by opposition fighters during their captivity face further reintegration challenges. Some women and girls return to communities with children whose fathers have been killed or have deserted these young mothers. This may be one reason, according to the Amnesty Commission, why female ex-combatants find it more difficult to reintegrate into their communities than do males. The assessment report contends that some women and girls are rejected by family members due to stigma regarding their time in the fighting forces. Other challenges facing women and girls formerly associated regard the lack of ability to remarry and find male support and their ineligibility to make up the years of schooling that they may have missed.

100. Apart from the social challenges of reintegration, women and girls face health and economic difficulties. For many, quality health care is not always accessible. Elsewhere, skills training programs often do not provide the trainees with adequate skills to generate income. In addition, there are many women-headed households who struggle to afford to send their children to school.

Recommendations and Indicators

101. The working group on Uganda determined that a top priority is to reduce and prevent further recruitment and abduction of women and girls into fighting forces, either rebel or government. It was therefore considered important to offer effective programming to reporters to reduce the number of ex-combatants who might rejoin fighting forces, by either coercion or choice. The types of programming identified as the most relevant in achieving this goal include greater community acceptance of those formerly associated with the armed opposition (to prevent rejected ex-combatants from returning to the fighting forces because of a sense of rejection) and building the capacity of the Amnesty Commission to collect data and report on security threats (which are perceived to prevent some target group members from accessing formal programming). For current and future programming, the Amnesty Commission promotes the idea of enabling women's involvement in managing reintegration programs on a national level.

102. In order to determine the success of programming, the working group on Uganda decided that the best indicators were those which measured how well reporters reintegrated into their communities. It is recognized, however, that many reporters return to IDP camps where community development may remain stagnant or be in decline. It

was therefore stressed that programming for ex-combatants should consider the wider community's needs as the best method to alleviate problems experienced by individual ex-combatants.

Summary

103. The national DDR programs, their approach to gender issues, and the challenges they face have a number of commonalities. Perhaps most notably is the low number of women and girl combatants who passed through their programs. This is due to a number of factors, including inaccurate and incomplete data on force composition by gender; narrow definitions of who qualifies to access official DDR processes; and stigma attached to females who have been associated with fighting forces, all factors which prevent women and girls from identifying themselves. National DDR programs also have limited capacity to address gender in DDR process, which has led to the marginalization of the issue. Programs reported strong stigma and discrimination against female combatants and women and girls associated with fighting forces among the communities they were sought to return. Finally, throughout the programs and planning, gender continued to be associated only with women, and, to a lesser extent, girls. More positively, women and girls who enter the official DDR programs reportedly do not face discrimination in terms of the packages they receive or the skills training and educational opportunities they have. However, throughout the workshop, most of the participants spoke about their increased recognition of the serious challenges they face in working with women and girl combatants and those associated with fighting forces and acknowledged that the DDR programs are currently not designed to reach that group.

Discussion

104. Participants raised a number of questions regarding the mechanisms for implementing the various DDR programs. There was discussion around the role of justice in moving communities forward after armed conflict, with debate around the role of granting amnesty to those who participate in the DDR process. Within this discussion there were exchanges regarding the rate at which former combatants participate in criminal activities after their demobilization. Some participants raised questions about how well programs were designed to meet the gendered needs of men, and the national DDR programs responded that none of the DDR programs had been designed with an explicit or critical gender analysis for men and their return into civilian life. There was additional discussion on the challenges of reintegration and the fact that most women and children associated with fighting forces are left out of programming.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

105. The MDRP Secretariat wrapped up the workshop with a summary of emerging themes and messages, conclusions and next steps from the workshop. These are presented here. It should be noted that the recommendations apply beyond the MDRP given that the MDRP itself is already in course, with all programs designed and many having completed demobilization processes.

Conceptual Approaches to Gender and DDR

106. Over the course of the workshop, three conceptual approaches were applied to addressing gender in DDR. The first was to view and treat women as a marginalized group and focus on their special needs. The second was to stress gender equity in DDR access and benefits. The third was to broaden the notion of gender analysis to include men and boys and to develop approaches to gender responsive programming that helped produce opportunities for change and social transformation for women, girls, men and boys. Within these three approaches, limitations in the timeframe and scope for DDR programs were important considerations, stressing that DDR programs are not comprehensive war recovery efforts. Having said this, post-conflict situations should offer opportunities for creating social change involving both women and men, as opposed to reinforcing a return to rigid gender norms that often contributed to the conflict and violence in the first place.

Access, Targeting and Eligibility Criteria for DDR Programs

107. Women face gender-specific constraints to accessing DDR benefits. A central problem is the lack of an accepted or commonly used definition of “female combatant” or “female associated with fighting forces”, meaning that female target groups are defined on a country-by-country basis. The primary beneficiaries of the MDRP-supported programs and projects are those people who operated within a military structure and actively engaged in preparing for armed conflict or actually used weapons. While the MDRP recognizes the importance of non-combatants associated with armed forces, this group is not a primary beneficiary of the program.

108. Other constraints identified include (a) unwillingness of male commanders to report on the presence of women and girls in the fighting forces; (b) refusal on the part of some male combatants to allow their wives/captives/domestic slaves to participate in DDR programs and thus potentially leave them; (c) lack of information provided to those within fighting forces on accessing the programs; (d) fear of stigmatization, threat and abuse by community members if association with the fighting forces is made public; (e) safety concerns based on perceived and actual security threats at demobilization centers; and (f) inability to leave the forces due to ongoing armed conflict. Implications for DDR programs include:

- (a) Increasing the effort to establish the force composition, and finding out how and why people joined, including the role of abduction.

- (b) Carry out, to the extent possible, pre-disarmament outreach specifically targeting women and girls in or associated with fighting forces.
- (c) Improve links and coordination with agencies and community structures working in parallel programs in areas that these populations would likely prioritize (such as health, education) to ensure improved planning for anticipated needs of girls and women, and to develop parallel programs that enable women and girls to have a safe space in which they can make decisions about accessing services without the influence of their captors or male counterparts.
- (d) Help reduce stigma by targeting “separated children” or creating “women’s centers”, as opposed to programs that focus exclusively on those formerly associated with the fighting forces.
- (e) Ensuring adequate resources allocated for gender.

Reintegration

109. Male and female ex-combatants, as well as those associated with fighting forces, face gender-specific challenges during reintegration. Communities perceive men’s and women’s role and experiences in conflict differently, as well as their value, worth and role upon returning to the community. For girls and women, challenges are primarily due to negative perceptions of their experiences within fighting forces (women as sexually spoiled), reduced access to education or employment, and discrimination in terms of access to and control of land and other property. Women with children born to members of fighting forces may face stigma in their communities. Men often face their own stigmas (males as violent criminals), and constraints including pressures to provide economic support for their families based on the expectations that men meet the norm of family provider. In some cases, their inability to meet these roles may lead to men’s dependency on alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism.

110. The above has implications in the type of reintegration support men and women could best receive. Recommendations for DDR include: identifying the specific gender needs in terms of education and skills training, health (including reproductive health), psychosocial assistance, access to resources and assets, and substance abuse treatment; providing gender sensitization for local leaders and community service providers; and working with complementary agencies to ensure that groups associated with fighting forces who are not eligible for DDR support receive the economic, livelihood, and psychosocial assistance support require.

Sensitization and Communications

111. The workshop findings demonstrated the central importance of improving sensitization and communications to address gender inequities in national DDR programs. Priority groups include combatants and the receiving communities, commanders who have been the powerbrokers, and key national and international

political officials. Gender and age need to be considered in designing and disseminating messages regarding DDR – with different messages to men and women, girls and boys. Different modalities can be used for sensitization and training, including: (a) mainstreaming in existing training, reconciliation and other activities; and/or (b) specific gender trainings and sensitization.

Capacity Building of National DDR Programs

112. Lack of capacity to address gender national DDR programs was a common thread running through the presentations of all national programs. Each program will need to identify specific requirements based on respective national program contexts and needs, but suggestions include hiring full time gender experts, preferably with experience working from both a male and female perspective, and ensuring that experts are involved early on, so as to better plan and design interventions early in the project cycle.

113. Given that most national programs are in full swing and all have been designed, there is a need for national programs to contract specialized technical support to create capacity on gender. Specific support suggested by representatives of national programs included: preparing technical guidance notes and sharing of available information (particularly as it relates to men and masculinity, on which very little practical information is available); and supporting training, in particular through sensitization of leadership and training of trainers.

Applied Research

114. The workshop demonstrated the need for more applied research on gender aspects of DDR programs, particularly as it relates to working with men on gender issues. Men and boys face a number of specific demobilization and reintegration challenges, but there are few gendered analyses of these challenges and fewer policies and programs which address these from a gender perspective. Understanding and addressing root causes of men and boys' participation in armed conflict is a key element in dealing with and curbing individual and collective violent behavior. In the context of DDR programming, there have been only few in-depth studies on the links between masculinity and violence. Increasing efforts to examine the gender-specific needs of men and boys may contribute to more successful reintegration processes and conflict mediation and prevention. Specific recommendations include:

- Supporting rigorous field-based research on masculinity, violence, and power relations within society and how these factors pertain to recruitment by fighting forces, ability to resist recruitment, demobilization, and reintegration;
- Drawing upon current gender research that looks at the populations involved in the armed conflict and in DDR programs to provide information on how to refine current programs to better address the needs of men and boys;
- Reviewing and adjusting current programming in light of the above research and findings.

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MDRP Secretariat
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
MSN J6-603
Washington, DC 20433 USA
phone : + 1 (202) 473 3328
fax: +1 (202) 473 8229
email: info@mdrp.org

www.MDRP.org